/26 cont./

602 [606] avoids pronouncing the name of his wife. When the wife's father and mother first visit their son-in-law, he must offer them presents in the same way as when he himself with his wife first visits the wife's parents.

V.

Mourning and Burial of the Dead

758 574 In general the Abkhaz are very compassionate towards the sick and never leave alone a person who is seriously ill. When the villagers are informed that one of their number is seriously ill, all of them without fail will visit him, inquire about his illness, encourage him, and try to cheer him. The patient is visited not only by his relatives, but also by all the other villagers, irrespective of their title or means. They usually come to visit the patient in the evening and spend the whole night with him, singing, dancing, or telling stories, making jokes, etc., with the object of somehow /27/ cheering the invalid and relieving his sufferings in one way or another. The sick are treated with home remedies, old wise-women say prayers over them, etc.

763 As soon as a patient dies, the women instantly break out in deafening wails and soul-shaking screams, at the same time tearing out their hair, scratching their bodies, beating themselves on the face and head, and so on. Meanwhile the whole 764 neighborhood gathers, and the weeping and sobbing increase. Some women closely related to the deceased begin to beat themselves, striking their heads against something or other; the others try to soothe and quiet them. But all these admonitions frequently have no effect on the frenzied mourners, who, as a result of the blows they have inflicted upon their own heads and bodies and of beating their heads against something, fall down as if dead. When quiet finally prevails, the funeral ceremony is arranged. The next of kin sew themselves mourning apparel, ● [203] and messengers are sent out with notices and invitations to the relatives, foster parents, friends, and acquaintances of the deceased; his fellow villagers on the other hand are obliged

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764 [203] to come to the mourning ceremony without being invited. The deceased is put in a coffin. The women in mourning apparel, barefooted, their dresses torn, bloody scratches on their faces, and their hair loose, arrange themselves behind the coffin. From the other side the male and female mourners approach the coffin. The arrangement of the lamentations is as follows. Let us suppose that four or five women are coming to bewail the deceased. As soon as they enter the yard, they immediately start weeping and shouting "avav," and at the same time they put their fingers to their temples and continue to scratch their faces with them down to the chin until they have finished their "avav." The women sitting by the coffin answer their "avav" with the same exclamation. The mourners slowly approach the house. Their wails and sobs gradually become louder; finally they enter the house, where the real communal mourning takes place. The mourners enter the house, beating their foreheads and breasts; they kneel down before the coffin and thus bewail the deceased.

In another part of the house the belongings of the deceased are put on display, his clothes and his weapons. After the mourning of the deceased, weeping and sobbing are done over his belongings also.

Sympathy for the relatives of the deceased is expressed by [195] visitors in the following manner: "Had this but not happened to you; had you but heard of my death instead, etc."

764 608 /28/ The foster mother of the deceased or her children, when they come to bewail the ward, break out in wails and cries even a verst from the house. In the yard they are met by people who have been stationed there for this purpose and who lead them by the hand into the house. This does not prevent the new arrivals from scratching their cheeks and necks on the way until they bleed, nor from beating their heads against the house-posts until they fall down before the coffin half-dead and with tears flowing. The foster father and his children likewise beat their heads and faces.

764 [1965] On the day of the funeral, lamentation for the deceased is general. Then, after the mourning, a funeral repast is arranged and all the guests are treated to bread, wine, and lenten fare, and by evening the deceased is buried.